

Extract from Galloway Journal Thursday October 11, 1883

New Parish Church at Girvan

The Countess of Stair laid the memorial stone of a new Parish Church at Girvan on Saturday, under the most auspicious circumstances, the weather being of the finest description. The new church which is already far advanced towards completion, occupies a fine site on the east side of Montgomerie Street, a little north of the old church, the main front facing west. The group of buildings comprise church with tower and spire, session house, vestry and hall. The church is roofed in one span over the nave, and has transepts right and left of the pulpit, with recess for organ. There is a gallery on three sides of the interior, mainly supported by brackets from side walls of nave, where there is only one seat in front of the passage leading to the galleries over transepts. There are four doors of exit, two in the front and two behind and two stairs communicating with galleries. The church is seated to accommodate 940 persons. The effect of the interior will be dignified and spacious, the arched screens at the junction of the transepts with nave giving lightness and variety to the side walls. The main entrance is by a richly shafted, moulded and carved doorway in the west gable, opening into a vestibule communicating with area and stairs to galleries. The gable over the entrance doorway is pierced by a large four-light window, enriched with tracery, and flanked by massive buttresses crowned with octagonal terminals. The gabled walls of the north-west stair have been subdued as much as possible so as to develop scale and importance in the main gable. The tower and spire at the south-west corner rises to a height of about 150 feet to the top of the vane, and will form a feature of considerable importance in the town when completed. The style of the church is Gothic of the early 13th century work.

The architects for the church are Messrs. J McKissock and WG Rowan, 234 West George Street, Glasgow. The Clerk of Works is Mr James Kerr and the following is a list of the various tradesmen:- Masons, Robert Aitkenhead & Sons, Blantyre; wrights, J & D Meikle, Ayr; plumbers, William Highet & Son, Ayr; slaters, William Highet & Son, Ayr; plasterer, John Kier, Glasgow; glazier, Robert Britton, Greenock; gas fitting, McIlwraith & Co, Ayr; ironfounders, M Cockburn & Co., Falkirk. The entire cost of the church will be £4500 and a hall is to be added at an additional cost of £650.

The ceremony took place at one o'clock in the presence of a large concourse of people. Lady Stair was accompanied to the platform by the Hon. Hew Dalrymple Hamilton, Capt. Hamilton of Pinmore, Mr F.T.R. Kennedy of Dunure, Mr J.K. Young of Glendoune, Rev Mr Corson, minister of the parish, Rev. R Lawson, Maybole, Rev Mr Webster, Girvan. The Kirk Session, building committee and representatives of other churches were also on the platform. After the Hundredth Psalm had been sung and prayer offered by the Rev Mr Corson, Mr Robert Marshall, session clerk, read an interesting statement giving the history of the old building and an account of the circumstances which led to its being replaced by the new and more commodious place of worship. The statement was as follows:

Before proceeding further with this interesting ceremonial it is perhaps fitting that a word or two should be said regarding the old building in which so many of us have worshipped for years and the circumstances which have led to it being replaced by this stately structure. The former parish church of Girvan was built in 1770. Its term of existence was thus in all 113 years. As originally constructed it was a small building but about the year 1800 the proprietor of the estate of Bargany built an addition on the east side of the church, afterwards known as the Bargany side. Even with this addition, however, the accommodation afforded was by no means adequate to the wants of the

parish; while at the same time, the internal arrangements were of a somewhat primitive character. The galleries, three in number, were clumsily constructed, and required each a separate entrance door, the seats were narrow and uncomfortable, and there was neither session room nor vestry. A strong wish had been felt by the congregation for years to have a building more commodious and more comfortable in which to worship, and this desire at length found expression somewhat more than a year ago in a petition addressed to the heritors and signed all but unanimously by the members and adherents of the church. In the petition the congregation, while asking the heritors for a building suitable to the wants of the parish stated that if such should be provided they would subscribe among themselves a sum of f1000 to aid in its construction. This offer, at once generous and unusual it is to be presumed had considerable weight in the decision that was arrived at. An architect was appointed to report on the condition of the old building, and as his report was eminently unfavourable it was at once resolved by the heritors to erect a new church that should accommodate 900 sitters at a cost of f4500, and to this the congregation, with the hope of some external assistance, have agreed to add a hall for Sabbath school and congregational purposes, capable of seating 400, and costing f 650. While the congregation have reason to take credit to themselves for the liberality which promoted them to assist, they one and all feel grateful for the readiness which they have acceded to the wishes of the people so far as was in their power. A very satisfactory evidence of the harmony existing among the heritors themselves as to this question is to be found in the fact that within three months of the time when the petition of the congregation was presented to them as a body they had selected the plan of the new church. This plan, chosen from a large number of competitors, was prepared by Messrs. McKissock & Rowan,, architects, Glasgow. The mason work was entrusted to Messrs R Aitkenhead & Sons, High Blantyre, and the manner in which the work has been hitherto done reflects the highest credit on their energy and skill.

Mr Kennedy introduced the Countess of Stair, and presented her with a beautiful silver trowel, on which was the following inscription;- " Presented to the Right Hon. The Countess of Stair on the occasion of her laying the memorial stone of Girvan Parish Church, - Girvan, 6th October, 1883."

Her Ladyship then performed the ceremony in a most graceful manner, and said:- "It gives me great pleasure to perform this ceremony today, as it is always a matter of satisfaction to me if I can in any way be of service to the inhabitants of Girvan, in whom I must always feel a deep interest. I sincerely trust your excellent minister may be long spared to continue the good work he has so long, so well, and so conscientiously performed. (Great cheering).

Captain Hamilton of Pinmore moved a vote of thanks to her Ladyship, which was acknowledged on behalf of her Ladyship by the Hon. Hew Dalrymple.

The Rev. R. Lawson, Maybole pronounced the Benediction.

After the ceremony the Countess of Stair left by Rail for Lochinch, while the company adjourned to Banks' Hotel, where a cake and wine banquet was served. Mr Kennedy, one of the largest heritors of the parish, occupied the chair. The usual loyal toasts having been honoured, the Chairman proposed the health of "The Earl and Countess of Stair" Mr Young proposed "The Clergy" and Rev. Roderick Lawson suitably replied. Rev Mr Corson proposed "The Heritors" and the Chairman Mr Kennedy replied. Mr Inglis proposed "The Congregation of the Parish Church of Girvan.